

THE SPIRANTHEA

By Harold Carter.

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Professor Singleton had crouched over his microscope. To the observer he would have seemed to be studying only a tiny spot of jelly upon a slide. The professor, however, was looking into a thickly populated world. The drop of jelly, like the world, was round, and within it several millions of the spiranthea Jacksonii were putting on wings.

This transformation of the spiranthea, which identified them with an-



The Hour Was Midnight.

other species hitherto believed to be separate, had never before been witnessed.

Singleton was forty-two. A rich man, he had devoted himself for years to his scientific investigations. Of late, however, ever since his marriage, the year before, to a charming society girl, who had devoted her whole care to his welfare, he had insensibly been drawn away from his hobby. That he had shamefully neg-

lected Mary did not occur to him. He had lived for his researches. Mary lived for him. She had abandoned all her old friends, except the Streets. George Street and she had been great friends before her marriage, and surprise had been felt that she had chosen the professor.

For two whole days and a night Singleton had bent over his microscope. He had not slept; he had eaten there, sipping beef tea and hot milk which his wife brought him. Now at last he was to be rewarded. Spiranthea was undoubtedly passing from the larval into the pupal stage, and from that into the full-fledged imago. Ten generations had died while he sat there; ten had been born, and the tenth was accomplishing what every scientist had denied.

Suddenly Professor Singleton heard George Street's voice in the next room, and Mary's answering. There was nothing strange in that, except for the tone and the hour. The hour was midnight; the tone was low and impassioned.

"An old man," Street was saying. "Mary, you have tied yourself for life to one who can never appreciate or understand you. Your life is one long sacrifice."

"I know it," answered Mary, ever so softly.

The professor's heart was thumping against his ribs. He had loved his wife devotedly, after his fashion, he had even secretly thought of retiring from science to devote his life to her; but scientist though he was he was also a human being.

Then in a moment he had forgotten, for he saw a curious movement among the animalculae in the jelly drop, and his eye was glued to the glass again.

"A shameless self-worshiper," Street's voice continued. "He lives for himself alone."

"No, there you do him an injustice," Mary responded. "He lives for science."

"And, like a Moloch, it immolates